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Close Encounters of the Comic Kind: Aristophanes' *Frogs* and *Lysistrata* in Athenian Mythological Burlesque of the 1880s

Abstract: This chapter examines a peculiar modern Greek adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, published anonymously in 1888. The translator took great liberties with the original text, its structure and its contents. More specifically, he (unlikely: she) slashed the entire second half of the *Frogs*, in which Aeschylus and Euripides engage in a poetic *agon* on the subject and ethos of tragedy. He substituted for this *agon* bawdy episodes of mythological burlesque that reveal affinities with contemporary adaptations of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and the other women's plays. The 1888 farcical adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs* was not an isolated case but preceded a fashionable trend in the modern Greek reception of Aristophanes that lasted through the 1930s and has traditionally been associated with the name of Polyvios Demetrakopoulos.

I. An Aristophanic *Skomma*

When does comedy "degrade" into farce? Is this process of comedy necessarily one of reduction and "degradation," or could it have value as a theater-historical indicator? Where do we find an example of this transformation of source texts that we still recognize in the final product, once the adaptation process is complete? To answer these questions, I turn to a little known Demotic Greek version of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which I discovered among the modern Greek holdings of the University of Cincinnati Library. The source text is the playwright's well-known comedy of 405 BCE, which scholars have long mined for its rich veins of humor (obscenity, scatology, role

I thank Professors Wolfgang Haase and Douglas Olson for their careful work editing and enriching this paper. In 2001, I was the lucky beneficiary of a Margo Tytus Visiting Fellowship from the Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati, which allowed me to use the Blegen Library for extended periods of time. I remain indebted to the librarians and staff members who graciously provided assistance and helped me advance my research and writing on this and other topics. All translations from modern Greek are my own, but I eagerly acknowledge the generous assistance of Anastasia Bakogianni, who helped fine-tune the translations. I have preserved the polytonic accent system of the modern Greek of the 19th century. Greek texts of Aristophanes are based on Jeffrey J. Henderson (ed.), *Aristophanes*, 5 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998–2007); and on Nigel G. Wilson (ed.), *Aristophanis fabulae*, 2 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). May this chapter be a token of my appreciation for Jeff Henderson's lifelong zeal to discover the bolder side of Aristophanes.

reversal, mistaken identity, parody, etc.). They have shown particular interest, however, in *Frogs'* comic version of "literary criticism," which is (with some risk) deduced from the play's second half or from the famous *agon* between the tragic playwrights Aeschylus and Euripides. The Demotic Greek play calls itself a σκῶμμα or "gibe"—or "farce," in the case of a gibe the length of a short play. It dates to 1888 and is thus one of the earliest published adaptations of Aristophanes in modern Greek.[1] The play is only 16 printed pages long and its full title reads: *Ἀριστοφάνους τοῦ πάλαι Ἀθηναίου κωμικοῦ ποιητοῦ Βάτραχοι· σκῶμμα. Βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοὰξ Βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ*, or "*Frogs* of the Old Athenian Poet Aristophanes: A Farce. Brekekekex koax koax Brekekekex koax koax" (in the modern Greek pronunciation, Vrekekekex).[2]

The booklet has a publication date of May 1888, which is printed in French on the front cover: "Mois Mai 1888." Although the adaptation is written entirely in modern Greek, the references to a French-Greek publication process reappear in the playful indication of the author: the work claims to be written "par moi," with no further hint of who the author might have been. The markers of an (assumed) non-Greek identity, however, may well be ironic statements on the part of a Greek writer provoked by the constant competition of French theater and literature in general.[3] No firm place of publication or publisher's name can be established. A handwritten line in the cover's top right corner reads: "To Mr. P. Demetrakopoulos," in the (Kathareuousa Greek) accusative case (masculine singular ending in *-on*) for the addressee or receiver of the publication. The modern Greek ἐνταῦθα still functions as an adverb of place, meaning "here," that is, "in this same city," which likely indicates a local address in Athens. Thus the dedication appears to invoke P[olyvios] Demetrakopoulos (who also went by the French-sounding pseudonym Pol [Paul] Arcas), one of Greece's most prolific early 20th-century authors and liberal translators of Aristophanes. Demetrakopoulos was very active in the theater world of Athens and apparently strengthened the anonymous playwright's resolve to adapt Attic comedy in a—bold to bawdy—vernacular version of the Greek language. The unknown author seems to have shared Demetrakopoulos' fascination with *fin-de-siècle* French theatrical culture and in particular risqué Aristophanic spectacles that thrived along with (mainly Parisian) mythological burlesques.[4]

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1 For a recent introduction to the complex art of Aristophanes, see James Robson, *Aristophanes: An Introduction* (London: Duckworth, 2009). For more background on the 18th- and 19th-century reception of Aristophanes in modern Greece, see Gonda Van Steen, *Venom in Verse: Aristophanes in Modern Greece*, Princeton Modern Greek Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), chapters 1–2.

2 The copy from the UC Library has sustained some water damage, but the text remains legible throughout. It can be found under call number PA3878.G8R3 1888. The acquisition date printed in the booklet (likely) by a UC librarian is September 30, 1961. This makes it probable that the booklet was one of numerous library purchases made by the famous archaeologist Carl Blegen, who taught at the University of Cincinnati.

3 Van Steen, *Venom in Verse* (above, n. 1), chapters 2–3 *passim*.

4 I use the term "mythological burlesque" with the connotations it has taken on in the field of Classics. David Walsh, for instance, refers to "mythological burlesque" to denote certain comic depictions in

Theater historian Thodoros Chatzepantazes describes how the Parisian imports, tokens of "European decadence," elicited the outrage of critics and moralists and at the same time drew full houses, in an age when the most prosperous Athenian urban classes were eager to be seen as denizens of the "Paris of the East."[5] The mythological parodies of Jacques Offenbach, such as the operettas *Orphée aux enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*, 1858) and *La belle Hélène* (*The Beautiful Helen* [of Troy], 1864), in particular were controversial symbols of the new European fad.[6] But whereas Offenbach and his Western European epigones turned the Olympian gods and Homeric heroes into comic protagonists, Greek authors looked for (relative) safety under the mantle of Aristophanes, who came from within the Greek tradition and had mined outrageous parody already in antiquity.[7] The 1888 version of *Frogs* with its teasing French notations of (anonymous) author and date may even have served as a hitherto unknown source of inspiration for the indefatigable Demetrakopoulos, who subsequently took on a French pseudonym to shift the full weight of this imported Western genre onto the women's plays of the "indigenous" Aristophanes.[8]

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vase paintings in his *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting: The World of Mythological Burlesque* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). On the question of how the French tradition of mythological burlesque interfaced with modern Greek playwriting, see Konstantina Ritsatou, "The Love Affairs of Zeus in Modern Greek Theater of the Nineteenth Century" (in Greek), in: Ephe Vapheiade and Nikephoros Papandreou (eds.), *Questions on the History of Modern Greek Theater: Studies Dedicated to Demetres Spathes* (in Greek), Symvoles stis epistemes tou anthropou: Philologia (Herakleio Crete: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2007), pp. 177–91.

5 See Thodoros Chatzepantazes, *Greek Comedy and Its Prototypes in the Nineteenth Century* (in Greek), Symvoles stis epistemes tou anthropou: Theatro (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2004), pp. 116–19.

6 *Greek Comedy* (above, n. 5), pp. 117, 119, notes that a 1874 touring production of the former almost led to violent riots in Athens, which were spearheaded by the conservative student population. The outcry over the production was exacerbated by the French company's scheduling of its performances during Lent (in an interesting perceived violation of both the nationalist and Christian religious sentiment of the Greek people).

7 Ritsatou, "Love Affairs" (above, n. 4), pp. 178, 191, explains how unprepared some Greek audiences were for the French-style bold caricatures of the Olympian gods and Homeric heroes. References to Greek antiquity, after all, formed solid building blocks of the 19th-century process of Greek nation-building. On audience behavior in the late 19th century more generally, see Ioulia Pipinia, "Reactions of the Theater Public in Athens in the Decade of 1890" (in Greek), in: Antones Glytzoures and Konstantina Georgiade (eds.), *Tradition and Modernization in Modern Greek Theater from Its Beginnings through the Postwar Period: Proceedings of the Third Panhellenic Conference on Theater Studies, Rethymno, 23–26 October 2008, Dedicated to Thodoros Chatzepantazes* (in Greek), Symvoles stis epistemes tou anthropou: Historia tou theatrou (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2010), pp. 549–59. On the general cultural climate in Athens by the end of the 19th century, see Alexes Polites, "Intellectual Life" (in Greek), in: Alike Solomou-Prokopiou and Iphigeneia Vogiatze (eds.), *Athens at the End of the Nineteenth Century: The First International Olympic Games* (in Greek) (Athens: Historike kai Ethnologike Hetaireia tes Hellados, 2004), pp. 249–71.

8 On Demetrakopoulos' free adaptations of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (1904) and *Lysistrata* (1905), see Chatzepantazes, *Greek Comedy* (above, n. 5), pp. 199–200; Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1),

Unfortunately, we do not know if the modern Greek farce of 1888 was ever performed, and if so, whether female actors played any of the roles. In the early 20th-century Greek tradition of adapting Aristophanes, which has long been credited to Demetrakopoulos and also to Georgios Soures (see below), it was common for both the casts and the audiences to consist of men only. To my knowledge, no comparable modern Greek Aristophanic farce has been preserved that predates 1900. But Section 5 (below) revisits this bizarre episode in the reception of the comic playwright and expands on its links to the *fin-de-siècle* French spectacle culture that favored his *Lysistrata* in particular.

II. A "Paraphrase" of Aristophanes

From the onset, the 1888 farcical adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs* calls itself a "paraphrase." The first page of regular text opens with yet another title and subtitle: *Βάτραχοι· σκῶμμα κατὰ παράφρασιν ἐκ τοῦ Ἀριστοφάνους*, or "*Frogs*: A Farce by Way of a Paraphrase from Aristophanes." Like the original play, the modern Greek adaptation can be divided into two main components: the comic *katabasis* or descent of Dionysus and his slave Xanthias into the Underworld, and the competition between the deceased playwrights Aeschylus and Euripides with Athenian tragedy—and a return to the living—at stake. The modern Greek play's self-characterization as a "paraphrase from Aristophanes" thus holds true for the equivalent of the original's first component. "Paraphrase," however, is too generous a term for the counterpart to Aristophanes' antagonistic standoff between Aeschylus and Euripides.

The list of characters of the modern Greek adaptation reveals that the self-styled "paraphrase" will venture in an entirely new direction. The list contains the names of Dionysus, Xanthias, Heracles, Charon, Plathane, Pandoceutria (Innkeeper), Persephone, the maidservant of Persephone, Plutus, Aeacus, the chorus of women, the chorus of frogs, and a dead man. Aeschylus and Euripides are conspicuously absent. Nonetheless, the modern Greek author delivers to his reading public the familiar banter between Dionysus and Heracles on the subject of "desiring" Euripides (Scene 2, p. 2), only to leave the expectation of the tragedian's appearance unfulfilled. The distinct breakdown of the modern author's prefiguration of the anticipated second part of the *Frogs* is marked by a clear shift on pages 11–12, at the beginning of the adaptation's tenth and final scene. This unexplained shift affects almost the entire latter third of the 1888 play, for which there is no model in either Aristophanes' *Frogs* or any extant ancient comedy.

pp. 102–6. Contemporary and subsequent comic adaptations by Demetrakopoulos included *Clouds* (1905), *Peace* (1905), *Birds* (1905; premiered 1911), *Frogs* (1910; premiered 1911), and *Thesmophoriazusae* (known "shocking" performances in 1914).

Structurally, the 1888 farce is divided not into *epeisodia* and choral parts but into scenes. The arrangement in (acts and) scenes is a recurring feature of 19th-century Greek adaptations of ancient plays, comedies and tragedies alike. By dividing their scripts into acts and scenes, Greek authors who reappropriated the texts of ancient drama conformed to European aesthetic norms of the late Baroque and neoclassical theater.[9] The division into scenes of the 1888 play is determined by the entry of new characters, which makes for an extremely short opening scene (less than one page) up until the appearance of Heracles, but also for the disproportionally long final Scene 10 (pp. 11–16), which features the new components by which the modern farce diverges from its classical prototype.[10] The "fashionable" arrangement in acts and scenes also led authors to cut most lyric choral passages; alternatively, the (reduced) chorus was made to contribute its lines to an overall more dialogic version of the original play. The resulting scripts were of the sort that a small company of actors could easily rehearse and perform. The chorus of frogs appears in Scene 4 of the 1888 adaptation, where it interrupts Dionysus' attempt to row the boat of Charon, who offers a rhythmic accompaniment to the laborious strokes. The next chorus, however, does not appear until the near-finale of Scene 10: in this closing scene, a chorus of women chimes in with three times two (dialogic) lines (p. 15), but the chorus of frogs has the final word of some 15 lines (p. 16).

Other structural and formal components codetermine the nature of the modern Greek "paraphrase" of *Frogs*: the play does not operate with ancient meters but follows an obvious scheme of end rhymes (mostly of the type a-a, b-b). This would have been

9 An 1831 Greek translation of Euripides' *Hecuba* advertises its arrangement in acts as "the new European way;" see Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou, *The Theater in "Our East": Constantinople—Smyrna. Eight Studies* (in Greek), Drama kai dromena (Athens: Polytropon, 2006), pp. 43–4. On the formal aspects of the modern Greek neoclassical adaptations based on Western models, see Thodoros Chatzepantazes, *The Greek Historical Drama: From the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century* (in Greek), Symvoles stis epistemes tou anthropou: Historia tou theatrou (Herakleio: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2006), pp. 74–8.

10 The Greek headings of the scenes announce the changes of characters, and the entire play breaks down as follows:

Scene 1 (p. 1): Dionysus, Xanthias
Scene 2 (pp. 1–4): Heracles and the Above
Scene 3 (p. 4): Dionysus, Xanthias, Charon, Dead Man
Scene 4 (pp. 4–6): Dionysus, Charon, Chorus of Frogs
Scene 5 (pp. 6–7): [Dionysus, Xanthias] (heading restored on the basis of the scene's characters, since the original does not list them)
Scene 6 (pp. 7–8): Dionysus, Xanthias, then Aeacus
Scene 7 (pp. 8–9): Maidservant of Persephone and the Above
Scene 8 (pp. 9–10): Pandoceutria (Innkeeper), Plathane, and the Above
Scene 9 (pp. 10–11): Dionysus, Xanthias, then Aeacus
Scene 10 (pp. 11–16): Plutus, Persephone, Maidservant, Dionysus, Aeacus, Xanthias, Chorus of Women, Chorus of Frogs.

impossible to sustain throughout the ancient Greek original, but its use is much facilitated by the modern Greek pronunciation (which through the process of iotacism has collapsed five different vowels and diphthongs into the same [i]-sound and also allows syllables containing *omega* to rhyme with those with *omicron*). From the perspective of humor and contents, however, the 1888 "paraphrase" preserves many of the original's scatological and obscene jokes and inserts a few anachronisms. The scatology of Aristophanes' opening scene of the *Frogs*, for example, has been readily adopted by the modern author. The 1888 farce did not yield to 19th-century demands for philological accuracy or "classical decorum." Nor did it show any fear of censorship in its repeated mention of male and female genitalia and in the personal digs against Cleisthenes, a politician prominent during the Peloponnesian Wars whom Aristophanes repeatedly associated with effeminate or homosexual practices (p. 2).

III. Railing and Derailment

But how does this modern Greek play transform itself into a farce after imitating Aristophanes' *Frogs* through no less than nine relatively "faithful" scenes? A closer look at the opening of Scene 10 may offer an answer. Plutus and his wife Persephone welcome Dionysus and Xanthias as their guests and act as their generous hosts in Hades (p. 12; Plutus extends a similar invitation to Dionysus and Aeschylus, albeit only toward the finale of the original *Frogs* [lines 1479–80]). Before Persephone's maidservant formalizes the invitation to the palace, however, Dionysus and Xanthias engage in an odd interchange as they recover from the torture that they have suffered in the previous scene, in which Aeacus tried to determine which of the incongruous pair was actually a god. While this question remains temporarily unresolved, Xanthias is quick to think on his feet again, whereas Dionysus starts raving about women and leaves the impression of being delirious. The following lines (pp. 11–12) form a sudden transition to the tenth and final scene but also to an altogether new subplot:

ΔΙΟΝ. Ὁποῖα ὄνειρα γλυκὰ ὁ νοῦς μου πλάττει τώρα
ἀφ' ὅτου ἔφυγον μακρὰν τὰ φάσματα κ' ἡ μπόρα.
Φαντάζομαι συμπλέγματα μαγευτικῶν εἰκόνων
καὶ καλλιστέρνους δέσποινας ἐπόθησ' ἀπὸ χρόνων
Ἠγάπησα περιπαθῶς τὸ γυναικεῖον φύλον,
καὶ δι' αὐτὸ ἐθύμωσα μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων φίλων.
ΞΑΝΘ. Ἀφεντικὸ παραληρεῖς τὸ βλέπω μὰ τὸν Δία,
πῶς πάσχεις δὲ φαντάζομαι ἀπὸ φρενοληψία.

Dionysus What sweet dreams my mind is now shaping
Now that the phantoms and the storm have long left!
I'm having fantasies of enchanting images in ensembles
And young women with pretty bosoms I have longed for for years!

I have loved the female sex passionately,
And it's the reason I've been angry with my other friends.
Xanthias Boss, you're raving; I can see it, by Zeus.
I hope you're not suffering from insanity.[11]

Plutus and Persephone are eager to receive news and hear stories from the world of the living. Both guests aver that they have little news to bring and no stories to tell, but Plutus urges them on nonetheless. Xanthias, who again proves more attuned to his hosts' expectations, obliges; he is also still wearing Heracles' lion skin and is therefore thought to be divine, whereas Dionysus continues to be mistaken for the slave (p. 13). Xanthias relates with verve the mythical story of Ganymedes' abduction by Zeus, who disguised himself as an eagle to whisk away the handsome shepherd boy from Mount Ida in Phrygia. Without explicitly referring to the myth's earliest source (the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* 202–17), Xanthias' tale in its modern Greek version places the emphasis on the homoerotic or homosexual elements of the myth (pp. 12–13):

ΞΑΝΘ. Τὴν ἀετοῦ μορφὴν λαβὼν ὁ Ζεῦς ἐπὶ τῆς Ἴδης
Ἔνθα τὰς αἴγας ἔβοσκεν ὁ παῖς ὁ Γανυμίδης
διὰ τοῦ ράμφους ἤγαγε, στὸν Ὄλυμπο ἐφάνη
ἐκεῖ δὲ τοῦτον παρευθὺς στὴν κλίνην του προφθάνει,
κ' ἐκεῖ τὸν κρύβει παρευθὺς γιὰ πάντα νὰ τὸν ἔχει
ἐπείδ' ἡ Ἥρα μύρισε πῶς κάτι τι θὰ τρέχει.
...
ἐν περιλήψει τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἂν θὲς νὰ ἐννοήσῃς,
τῷ λέγει, ὦ Γανύμιδες ἐλθὲ νὰ μὲ φιλήσῃς.
...
Καὶ ἀετὸς ἐγίνηκα καὶ σ' ἥρπασα ἀπ' τὴν Ἴδη
γιὰ νὰ κοιμώμεθα μαζὺ φίλτατε Γανυμίδη·
νὰ σὲ φιλῶ νὰ μὲ φιλᾶς μαζὺ νὰ ἀγρυπνοῦμε·
νὰ σ' ἀγαπῶ νὰ μ' ἀγαπᾶς ὁμοῦ ν' ἀγαπηθοῦμε·
καὶ ἐν συνόψει τοιγαροῦν ἂν θὲς νὰ ἐννοήσῃς
χύσε κρασὶ στὴν κύλικα καὶ ἐλθὲ νὰ μὲ φιλήσῃς.

Zeus took on the shape of an eagle on Mount Ida
where the boy Ganymedes was herding his goats.
He took him with his beak, and he appeared on Olympus
where he rushed him straight to his bed.
There he also hid him straightaway, to have him forever,
because Hera got wind that something might be up.
...

11 The modern Greek rhyme defies conversion into English both here and in the following passages quoted from the 1888 adaptation.

In sum, then, and if you care to get it,
He told him, "Ganymedes, come and kiss me.
...
I became an eagle and I snatched you up from Mount Ida,
so that we can sleep together, my dear Ganymedes:
so I can kiss you and you can kiss me, and we can stay up all night together,
so I can love you and you can love me, and we can be together in love.
In short, then, and if you care to get it,
pour wine in my cup and come and kiss me."

Narrating the myth of a hidden love affair that confounds social and hierarchical distinctions encourages Xanthias to engage in flirtatious asides and to begin fancying Persephone, his female host. Persephone picks up on Xanthias' infatuation with her and asks to hear more about another famous mythical case of—this time heterosexual—adultery: Aphrodite's extramarital affair with Ares (originally told at length in *Odyssey* 8.266–366). The 1888 play grows increasingly sexually suggestive and this mythical story too barely cloaks the furtive interchanges between slave guest and divine host. Xanthias relates how Helios saw the adulterous couple and informed Hephaestus, Aphrodite's husband, who ensnared the lovers and kept them bound in his bed. Hephaestus then called the other gods to come and share his outrage about the blatant act of adultery, although they in fact burst out in laughter, and the Hermes of *Odyssey* 8.338–42 readily admits that he too would sleep with Aphrodite, even if all the other gods were to look on. The text of the 1888 farce reads (pp. 13–14):

ΞΑΝΘ. Πρῶτος στὴν κλίνην ἔγειρεν ὁ φίλος μου ὁ Ἄρης
...
Τοῦτον ὁ Ἥλιος ἰδὼν τὸ λέγει τοῦ Ὑφαίστου
...
Κ' ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ὁ Ὕφαιστος φυλάει καραοῦλι,
καὶ τὰ αὐτιά του τέντωσε σὰν ξενικὸ μαροῦλι.
Καὶ γούρλωσε τὰ μάτια του σὰν ψάρι πεινασμένο,
τὸν Ἄρη βλέποντας γυμνὸ καὶ καταϋδρωμένο.
κρὶκ, κρὰκ τὴν πόρτα ἄκουσε κατόπιν νὰ ἀνοίξη,
καὶ τὴν καρδιά του βάστιξε μὴ πάθη ἀπὸ σφύξι.
Τὴν Κύπρον δὲ προβαίνουσαν καὶ βαίνουσαν στὴν κλίνη,
Ἂμ' ὡς τοὺς εἶδε γείραντας πρὸς δὲ κ' αὐτὸν κ' ἐκείνη,
κι' ἐπὶ τὸ ἔργον βρίσκοντο μὲ τὸ σχοινὶ τοὺς δένει,
κι' ἐφώναζε κι' ἄλλους θεοὺς νὰ 'δοῦνε τὶ συμβαίνει.
Κ' ἀρχίσανε τοὺς γέλωτας καὶ νὰ τοὺς κοροϊδεύουν,
καὶ μπλέκανε τὰ πόδια τους ἀντὶ νὰ ξεμπερδεύουν.
Τὰ κατὰ Ἄρην ταῦτα 'ναι καὶ τὰ κατ' Ἀφροδίτην

My friend Ares was the first to lie down on the bed.
...
Helios saw him and told Hephaestus.
...

And when Hephaestus saw him, he went to lie in wait,
And he pricked up his ears like a strange head of lettuce.
And he popped his eyes wide open like a starving fish,
when he saw Ares naked and drenched in sweat.
Crick, crack, he heard the backdoor opening,
And he held his heart so as not to suffer a heart attack.
Aphrodite entered and went to the bed,
and when he saw them and saw her, too, leaning over to him,
and when they were in the middle of the act, he tied them up with rope.
Then he called the other gods too to come and see what was happening.
And they burst out in laughter and began to make fun of them,
and they tied up their feet instead of disentangling them.
So much for the story of Ares and Aphrodite.

After this, Xanthias promises to tell the myth of Hermes and Pan, but his story of how the two found themselves at the foot of Mount Hymettus dissolves into mere allusions to Hermes' fatherhood of Pan and the affairs both carried on (pp. 14–15). Again, the myth and its constitutive parts serve to illustrate the Olympians' loose morals and their pursuit of amorous involvements. Xanthias uses this myth too to proposition Persephone, who responds with stealthy nudges and signs of encouragement. At last Xanthias reveals his true identity and that of Dionysus, stressing that his master's original intent was to fetch Euripides from the Underworld and that posing as Heracles and his slave was a pretense (p. 15). The feisty Plathane then urges that both imposters be chased out of Hades as quickly as possible (p. 15). The plan to retrieve Euripides is now abandoned completely. The chorus of frogs reappears to present the play's finale: they sing about the physical punishments they propose to inflict on the intruders Dionysus and Xanthias, who have shamelessly deluded the gods of the Underworld (p. 16). This song is reminiscent of Aeacus' vengeful threats and also of the innkeeper's and Plathane's menaces in *Frogs* 465–78 and 571–8, respectively; it repeats some of the vivid punishments the author conjured up in the equivalent scenes earlier in the play.

IV. Aristophanes and Mythological Burlesque

The modern Greek farce raises multiple questions about origins and sources. Where did this idea for a farcical *Frogs* play originate? Does the deliberate association with Demetrakopoulos offer any clues? This section focuses on contemporary models for the 1888 adaptation of *Frogs*, whereas the next and final section explains how the prolific Demetrakopoulos took similar adaptations to the broader Greek public and determined the future of Aristophanic comedy for the subsequent three decades.

Much of the late 19th- and early 20th-century urban Greek spectacle culture was modeled on the French prototypes of the fashionable *revue*, cabaret, *vaudeville* and *boulevard* shows. In the *fin-de-siècle* era, Athenian theater practitioners began to adopt the Parisian *revue* and called it by the literal Greek equivalent name of *epitheor-*

ese.[12] The French *revues* presented farcical reworkings of ancient mythical stories, and our 1888 adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs* was likely inspired by this tradition of mythological burlesque. A lead character in the French wave of revamping Aristophanic comedy as bold mythological spectacle was Maurice Donnay, author of a titillating adaptation of *Lysistrata* (1892), which captured the *boulevard*'s and the *revue*'s fascination with extramarital love and was noted in Athens as well.[13] The satire of the 1888 *Frogs* similarly defines mythological burlesque as eroticized and sexualized play, to which it gives preference over political or social satire. Increasingly, popular Parisian "hedonist" entertainment objectified mythical or legendary women (Helen of Troy, Aphrodite, Eurydice, Galatea, Phryne and other Greek *hetaerae*, maenads or bacchants, among others) for the sake of male voyeuristic pleasure. Donnay's Lysistrata, contending with the courtesan Salabaccho for the favors of a common lover, became one of them.[14] The Lysistrata of Donnay's version gained extraordinary visibility, and this popularity, which spread throughout Western Europe, caused the other Aristophanic heroines to quickly follow suit. Comic revivals of the early 20th-century urban Greek stage, however, were monopolized by men and performed for male eyes only. Male actors and theater practitioners, along with the male translator, protected and defended Aristophanic comedy as their own exclusive territory in which they could experiment with gender-bending and gender-bashing. In the spirit of male solidarity,

12 For more information on the French theatrical fashions that inspired trends throughout Europe, see Christophe Charle, *Théâtres en capitales: Naissance de la sociéteé du spectacle à Paris, Berlin, Londres et Vienne, 1860–1914*, Bibliothèque Albin Michel Histoire (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008). For an introduction to the Athenian *epitheorese* of the late 19th and early 20th century, see Thodoros Chatzepantazes and Lila Maraka (eds.), *The Athenian Epitheorese* (in Greek), 3 vols., Nea Hellenike Vivliotheke 34 (Athens: Hermes, 1977). See also Maria Maurogene, "The Boulevard and the Stage Interpretation of Attic Comedy" (in Greek), in: Konstantza Georgakake (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second Panhellenic Conference on Theater Studies. Relations of the Modern Greek Theater with the European Theater: Processes of Reception in the History of Greek Dramaturgy from the Renaissance until Today, Athens, 18–21 April 2002* (in Greek), Parabasis Supplement 3 (Athens: Ergo, 2004), pp. 265–73; Giannes Sideres, *History of Modern Greek Theater, 1794–1944* (in Greek), vol. 2.2 (Athens: Kastaniotes, 2000), pp. 105–15. On Demetrakopoulos' preoccupation with the *epitheorese*, see Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), pp. 106–10.

13 Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), pp. 110–12. For further historical context to the prominent figure of Donnay, see Charle, *Théâtres* (above, n. 12), pp. 171–2; Christophe Prochasson, *Paris 1900: Essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), pp. 20, 63. On celebrity women's performance practices of the *fin-de-siècle*, see Catherine Hindson, *Female Performance Practice on the* fin-de-siècle *Popular Stages of London and Paris: Experiment and Advertisement*, Women, Theatre and Performance (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 44–57, 186–205.

14 Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), p. 111. Simone Beta, "The Metamorphosis of a Greek Comedy and Its Protagonist: Some Musical Versions of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*," in: Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek (eds.), *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 248, notes that once the late 19th-century Lysistrata has abandoned the sociopolitical concerns of her Aristophanic counterpart, she turns into a "cynical individual who first assembles the machine of the sex-strike and then disregards it by sleeping with her lover."

they refused access to female actors and spectators with the excuse, or verdict, that women were "too (morally) vulnerable" and too easily "corrupted."[15]

With its French references, then, the 1888 adaptation of *Frogs* appealed not only to the many Greeks in the home country who followed French fashions but also to Greek expatriates in France and to Greeks anywhere who had some French education and were familiar with the Western European boom in mythological burlesque. The British tradition of parodic or burlesque imitations of ancient drama (and in particular classical Greek tragedy), for example, flourished and shaped an English literary as well as theatrical reception.[16] The 1888 version of *Frogs* foregrounded contemporary Western developments in theater and spectacle and distanced itself from strictly Greek ties that might have problematized the adaptation: it rejected the spoken or unspoken constraints of scholarly, philological or moralizing contexts for reading Aristophanes; readily discarded one of the most humorous and interesting examples of paratragedy from antiquity and flaunted its new mythological substitutions; and dodged the notorious Greek Language Question, which was hotly debated in and around 1888.[17]

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15 See Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), chapter 3, esp. pp. 78–81, 95–7, for more on this transgressive Aristophanic spectacle culture and the links between this play on gender, gender demarcation, the broader modern Greek and international feminist debate, and the ensuing antifeminist backlash. See further Eleni Varikas, "Gender and National Identity in *fin de siècle* Greece," *Gender and History* 5 (1993), pp. 269–83.

16 On mythical and tragic burlesques of the mid-Victorian era through 1870, see further Edith Hall, "1845 and All That: Singing Greek Tragedy on the London Stage," in: Michael Biddiss and Maria Wyke (eds.), *The Uses and Abuses of Antiquity*, Smithsonian Series in Archaeological Inquiry (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 37–55; Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh, "The Ideology of the Classical Burlesque," in: Hall and Macintosh (eds.), *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 350–90. Amanda Wrigley devotes a chapter section to "Oxford's classical burlesques" (of the mid-19th century) in *Performing Greek Drama in Oxford and on Tour with the Balliol Players* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), pp. 23–31. Topics of Oxford burlesques included Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (pp. 25–6 and 26–30, respectively). Laura Monrós Gaspar, *Cassandra, the Fortune-teller: Prophets, Gipsies and Victorian Burlesque,* Le Rane Studi 56 (Bari, Italy: Levante, 2011) examines the tragic Cassandra as a figure of Victorian burlesque. This volume includes the full text of a representative burlesque play, Robert Reece's *Agamemnon and Cassandra or the Prophet and Loss of Troy* (1868). On Shelley's comedy *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, which drew on Aristophanes' *Frogs* as well as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, see Michael Erkelenz, "The Genre and Politics of Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*," *The Review of English Studies* NS 47, no. 188 (1996), pp. 500–20.

17 For the complex Language Question (*Glossiko Zetema*), see Roderick Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature*[2] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 296–365; Geoffrey C. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*, Longman Linguistics Library (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 344–8. The Language Question, or the decades-long struggle to determine a national language, was perhaps the most poignant expression of the uncertainty about modern Greek identity. The 19th-century Greek intelligentsia advanced the artificially reconstructed register of the Kathareuousa over the vernacular (although there were many shades to the Demotike, including literary and other written forms), in order to address the ideological needs of the nation-building project, with its many

The year 1888 was generally a time of literary and cultural renewal. Ioannes Psychares became the most visible proponent of Demoticism with the 1888 publication of *To taxidi mou* (*My Journey*), which attempted to lay out the scientific foundations of the Greek vernacular. The same year saw the opening on Syngrou Avenue of the Municipal Theater (Demotikon Theatron) of Athens, which remained active until 1936. This playhouse saw several Demotic premieres and repeat performances of Aristophanes' works, including Demetrakopoulos' 1905 *Lysistrata*. By promoting vernacular drama, the Demoticists of 1888 hoped to establish their linguistic theory and practice no less on stage than in lyric poetry and prose fiction, realms in which the popular tongue had long since gained considerable freedom and legitimacy.[18]

V. Aristophanes' Women's Plays in Early 20th-century Greece

In the final decades of the 19th century, Greek moral, philological, archaeological and theatrical obstacles to Aristophanes' comeback gradually eroded. As a translator and adaptor of Aristophanes, Demetrakopoulos challenged the remaining verbal, visual and sexual taboos against the ancient playwright, especially in the case of obscenity —the forbidden fruit that was nonetheless "authentically" classical. His influence cannot be overestimated. It is therefore no coincidence that the author of the 1888 *Frogs* affiliated himself with Demetrakopoulos by way of the handwritten dedication. Demetrakopoulos' versions of the women's plays of Aristophanes, in particular, such as his 1904 *Ecclesiazusae*, 1905 *Lysistrata*, and 1914 *Thesmophoriazusae*, were still located in but not restricted to the ancient plots and time periods. These adaptations used either verse or prose and perpetuated an arrangement in acts and scenes. They

stakes in historical continuity and pure lineage. In the largely uncharted domain of state-subsidized revival tragedy of the late 19th and early 20th century, this question boiled down to the director's—or the institution's—choice between delivering the text in the original ancient Greek or using a translation in Kathareuousa, by then the official idiom of the state, the bureaucracy and formal education. Both choices, however, were far from presenting viable theatrical options. The riots with which the 1903 *Oresteia* production was received and the clashes between conservative students and the police out to protect enthusiastic spectators, have gone down in history as a narrowly national issue, as nationalist rows symptomatic of the linguistic fanaticism that fueled the Greek Language Question. The two main objects of contestation between progressive, demoticizing translation and linguistic dogma, the Christian scriptures and pagan classical tragedy, were conjoined as victims beset by a common enemy. An academic shift to the study of broader issues of Greek national identity, of which performance, translation and language remain constitutive elements, is long overdue. See recently, however, Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece 1766–1976* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

18 See Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* (above, n. 17), pp. 335, 342.

were also infused with bold Demotic jokes, obscenities, sociopolitical anachronisms and antifeminist satire. The early 20th-century modern Greek reception of Aristophanes' women's plays was in fact characterized not only by a thick layer of antifeminist prejudice but by the overt exclusion of women, as a transvestite exploration of sexuality and role-playing gained popularity in the bawdy adaptations of Demetrakopoulos. The transvestite shows sustained an atmosphere of antifeminist hostility and fostered male fraternization around the uninhibited, sex-based humor and spectacle of a (proclaimed) kindred male, Aristophanes. Demetrakopoulos also reduced the literary and historical dimensions of *Thesmophoriazusae*, for example, and thus the weight bestowed on Euripides and paratragedy.[19]

But I owe the reader an example of the uses to which Demetrakopoulos put Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* even in a dire wartime situation. In 1915, at the onset of the First World War, Demetrakopoulos joined forces with Bambes Anninos and Georgios Tsokopoulos to present that year's popular annual *revue*, the *Panathenaia*. They boldly called their work the *International Panathenaia of 1915* and introduced versatile female characters who resembled Aristophanes' heroine: the women of 1915 who call for worldwide peace employ Lysistrata's old weapon of a sex strike. They ignore the war's real drama and abuse the crisis as a pretext for teasing and taunting their men. The following bouncy song, performed by women, is also a belittling self-caricature:[20]

Τρέξατε στὸ Ὕπρ, στὴς Φλάντρες,
στὸ Ἄρρὰς, στὰ Δαρδανέλλια
τοὺς χαμένους σας τοὺς ἄντρες
γαργαλίστε τους μὲ γέλοια,
καὶ μὲ σκέρτσο καὶ μὲ νάζι
ρίχτε ἐρωτικὴ ματιὰ
νὰ τοὺς καίῃ, νὰ τοὺς βράζῃ
τῆς ἀγάπης ἡ φωτιά.

REFRAIN
Τὰ δεχόσαστ' ὅλ' αὐτά;
Ὅλαι· Μάλιστα, πολὺ σωστά.
...

19 Polyvios T. Demetrakopoulos [Pol Arcas, pseud.] (trans.), *Aristophanes' "Thesmophoriazusae": Translation and Adaptation* (in Greek) (Athens: Ankyra, n.d.). See also Van Steen, "Trying (on) Gender: Modern Greek Productions of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*," *American Journal of Philology* 123 (2002), pp. 407–27.

20 This *epitheorese* was staged at the Kotopoule Theater in Athens. For further context, see Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), pp. 108–9. See also Maria Maurogene, "Aristophanes on the Modern Greek Stage" (in Greek) (Diss. Crete, 2007), pp. 118–26; and "The History of a Profession: The Mimes/Transvestites during the Interwar Period" (in Greek), in: Glytzoures and Georgiade (eds.), *Tradition and Modernization* (above, n. 7), pp. 273–83.

Ἔξω βγάλτε τὰ λαιμά σας
καὶ τὰ μπράτσα σας τ' ἀφράτα
κι' ὅταν ἔρχωνται σιμά σας
χαϊδευθῆτε σᾶν τὴ γάτα·
δόστε καὶ στὸν κάθε βλάκα
ἀπὸ δυὸ γλυκὰ φιλιὰ
καὶ ἀφῆστε τους στὴ λάκκα
νὰ γαυγίζουν σᾶν σκυλιά.

Τρανσπαρὰν φορεματάκια
κάθε μιά σας νὰ φορέσῃ
καὶ λιγῶστε τὰ ματάκια
καὶ λιγῶστε καὶ τὴ μέση,
ἔτσι τεντωτὸς νὰ μείνῃ,
ὁ κορμός σας ὁ χυτός,
καὶ ἀφῆστε νὰ τοὺς ψήνῃ
τεταρταῖος πυρετός.

Κι' ὅταν 'δῆτε πῶς δὲν πιάνει
καὶ πῶς χάνετε τὸν κόπο,
τότ' ἀρχίστε τὸ φουστάνι
νὰ σηκώνετε μὲ τρόπο·
κι' ὅταν δείξῃ μιὰ κυρία
ποδαράκι παχουλὸ,
θὰ τοὺς πιάσῃ μερμηρία
καὶ θὰ χάσουν τὸ μυαλό.[21]

Run to Ypres in Flanders, to Arras, to the Dardanelles.
Tempt your lost men with laughter, wit, and coquetry.
Cast an erotic glance at them,
so that love's flame may scorch and devour them.

REFRAIN

You accept all of that?
ALL: Sure! Very right...
...
Bare your neck, and your arms, white and soft.
And when the men come near you, snuggle like a cat.
Give each idiot two kisses, too,
and then leave them in the pit, barking like dogs.

A transparent little dress each one of you must wear.
And cast languishing glances, and wiggle your hips too,
Keep your shapely body stretched out like this.
And let a hellish fever fry them.

21 Polyvios T. Demetrakopoulos, Bambes Anninos and Georgios Tsokopoulos, *International Panathenaia of 1915. [Collection of] All the Songs* (in Greek) (Athens: Mystakides et al., 1915), pp. 21–2.

> If you see that that doesn't work, and that you're wasting effort,
> then start to pull up your skirt in the right way:
> for when a woman reveals her fleshy legs,
> anguish will seize them, and they'll lose their mind.

Demetrakopoulos has been credited with spearheading a popular antifeminist Aristophanic revival, which lasted well into the 1930s, but whose earliest beginnings can now be traced back to the 1880s and 1890s. This long-lasting trend in the modern Greek reception of Attic comedy ran contrary to contemporary academic treatment of Aristophanes, in which careful text editions provided the basis for faithful philological translations but seldom for stage performances. The 40-year-long Greek comic tradition of questioning gender and social transformation focused mainly on *Lysistrata* and the other women's plays, but also included comedies such as *Clouds*, the latter made famous in a risqué version of 1900 written by the satirist Georgios Soures.[22] But the older, standard work on the topic, the theater history of Giannes Sideres, does not mention any bawdy versions of *Frogs* until 1911, when Demetrakopoulos' adaptation of the play furnished the script for a male-only production by the transvestite-producer Kyros Kyros.[23] The author of the early *Frogs* of 1888, then, treated Aristophanes with all the irreverence the 19th-century Greek theater world brought to comedy, while continuing to respect the classical pedigree and "timeless" value of tragedy and other genres of ancient Greek literature. The modern farce severed itself from canon-formation and classicizing norms and initiated the extremely popular phase in Aristophanes' Greek reception of the next half century. It helped determine this reception's bizarre priorities in taste, fashion and morality that moved beyond *Frogs* to explore more fertile ground in the women's plays. The farce essentially debunked the "classical" in its 19th-century definition by deconstructing its cultural and ideological underpinnings. It also challenged and subverted the authorship of both the ancient playwright and the modern one, who still did not dare to use his own name.

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22 On Soures' *Clouds* of 1900, see Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), pp. 91–102. On Soures as a playwright and satirist, see Chara Bakonikola-Georgopoulou, "Soures and the Theater" (in Greek), in: Bakonikola-Georgopoulou, *Rules and Exceptions: Texts on the Modern Greek Theater* (in Greek, Techne tou theamatos 8 (Athens: Hellenika Grammata, 2000), pp. 15–22; "The Theater of Soures and Its Roots" (in Greek), in: Vapheiade and Papandreou, *Questions* (above, n. 4), pp. 209–16; Anna Papaïoannou, "The Political Satire of Soures: Complacent Ethography or Penetrating Critique? Reference to the First Greek Parliamentary System" (in Greek), *Synchrona Themata* 2nd s. 9, no. 26 (1986), pp. 49–56. See also Chatzepantazes, *Greek Comedy* (above, n. 5), pp. 198–200. For more on Aristophanes and his influence on the 19th-century Greek satirical press, see Chatzepantazes, *Greek Comedy*, pp. 163–82; Van Steen, *Venom* (above, n. 1), pp. 52–4, 92–4.

23 For the popularity of Aristophanes in the 1910s, see Giannes Sideres, *The Ancient Theater on the Modern Greek Stage, 1817–1932* (in Greek) (Athens: Ikaros, 1976), pp. 238–40, 249, 253, 256–8, 260, 278–81. See also the brief allusions in his *History of Modern Greek Theater, 1794–1944*. Vol. 1, *1794–1908* (in Greek) (Athens: Kastaniotes, 1990), pp. 138, 247–50, 266–7.